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COLUMBUS.

1492-1892.

400th ANNIVERSARY SERMON,

— BY —

REV. JAMES CALLAGHAN, S.S.

ST. PATRICK'S, MONTREAL.

Sunday, October 23rd, 1892.

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400th Anniversary Sermon

By Rev. James Callaghan, S.S., St. Patrick's, Montjeal, Sunday. Oct. 23rd, 1892.

"Fear not, for I am with thee, I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west."—Isaiah, XLIII.

Of all the phenomenons that have marked the course and progress of human events, none has left so deep and profound an impress upon the page of history as the discovery of America, four hundred years ago. After a long and searching inquiry into the minutest details of the immortal expedition, the historian is at a loss to decide which is the greater of the two; the conquest which won for the civilized world an entire hemisphere or the hero who planned and executed the stupendous undertaking. America with its then unexplored mines of wealth and its boundless tracts of rich uncultivated vegetation, its deep impenetrable forests, its lofty peaked mountain-ranges; a land as large in extent as the then known world, watered within by majestic lakes and rivers; an isolated and independent continent bathed by the Arctic and the Antarctic Seas to the North and South and lying like a priceless gem between the two continents of Europe and Asia and cut off from either by the Atlantic to the East and the Pacific to the West; a vast country peopled with the remnants of a generation once under the influence of Christian civilization, sunk afterwards in all the horrors of barbarism, susceptible again of the grace of Divine Faith and of ranking among the beloved children of God; Columbus grasping in the palm of his mighty hand one half of the terrestrial globe, lifts it out of the deep waters of oblivion where it lay embedded as a gem concealed from the eye of ci-

vilization for centuries and like a modern Atlas bears it aloft on his broad muscular shoulders, as a conqueror his prey while in the meridian height of his glory, grappling with the petty passions of his rival competitors, battling with the vicissitudes of adverse fortune, despoiled in his just rights, he stands out in all the magnitude of his superhuman character and challenges all hostile criticism. Apart from the brilliant pageant which greeted the hero on his first return from America, Spain was exceedingly sparing in her praises of the great Discoverer. His grave seemed to seal in everlasting gloom his remains and his memory. Posterity appears to ignore his very existence till 1892, commemorating the 400th anniversary of his imperishable deed, has awakened throughout the world's expanse an echo of universal gratitude. Columbus is ours, exclaims Leo XIII on the subject. He sounded the keynote in imitation of his illustrious predecessor, Alexander VI., who in 1492 ordered public acts of thanksgiving to God in acknowledgement of the valuable benefits, both spiritual and temporal, consequent upon the discovery. I cannot, dearly beloved brethren, refrain from expressing Ireland's special tribute to his sacred memory. Centuries after 1492, he became an important factor in the destinies of our people by giving to the homeless a home, where her sons and daughters enjoy liberties denied them perseveringly beneath their own native skies, and where by their industry and talent they show their appreciation of the inestimable benefits conferred upon them, rise into promi-

nence in every useful department of life, and pose honorably in the higher grades of professional and legislative importance. We, dearly beloved brethren, rejoice particularly in a cordial fellowship with Columbus, for we proudly recognize in him the scholar and the missionary.

A sailor at fourteen, Columbus, an Italian by birth, silenced in his youthful breast all the promptings of pleasure, and, unlike his companions in age generally, yielded to study and reflection the years of boyhood, which are not unfrequently devoted to the cravings of passion and the allurements of vice. When the night shades rested on the dark billowy ocean-waves, and the young mariner sought in his rude hammock the sweets of repose from his day's toil and excitement, he dreamed of the bright cheerful rays of a morrow's sun, and hoped that they would light up some obscure outlines of a yet undiscovered and unknown territory. Years rolled on. New skies unfolded to his eyes their ever-changing forms. His conversational powers were interesting beyond description. The customs, manners, usages and looks of the peoples who crossed his path on his voyages formed the topic of universal comment. He had an easy access to the world-renowned libraries, wherein were kept and treasured among other valuable manuscripts the official and authentic reports of all the American discoveries prior to his time. His lengthy correspondences with Paolo Toscanelli and Martin Behaim, testify to his reputation as a scientist of no inconsiderable merit in the art of navigation. His charts and maps of his own voyages are indications of his profound sagacity in assigning them at that remote period to their proper places upon the geography of the world. His exhaustless store of knowledge must indeed have added great weight to his argumentative lore and largely contributed to the moulding of others' opinions according to his views. Had nature but gifted him with a slender fortune of two thousand pounds sterling, how gladly he would have launched out with his crew into the broad deep Ocean and convince the world with the reality

of his prophecy:—"I shall discover the Indies in sailing towards the West, and if the Atlantic has any other limit than India, I shall discover it also!"

Alas! he was poor and penniless, and was under the painful necessity of knocking at charity's door. Genoa, his own native Republic, repudiated his solicitations and his offers. Like his divine Original, "he came to his own and his own received him not." As he caught a glimpse of Italy's beautiful sky, he remembered his divine Master's injunction to His Apostles, "Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words: going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet." St. Matt. x. 14. His mother-country having discountenanced and discarded her own child as a visionary and an adventurer, he had no other alternative than to seek from a foreign government what his own home declined him. Portugal's maritime fame led him to her shores. A rival of Genoa at first, she gradually eclipsed the fame of the latter, by opening a through passage into India by sea. This important discovery had been made lately, and in the opinion of the most erudite Portuguese Cosmographers offered a final answer to the all-absorbing nautical question of the day: Which is the easier, less dangerous and more direct road into the rich possessions of the East Indies? Columbus enters upon the arena of polemic discussion. He wrote to King Juan II.: "I have been travelling from my youth. For forty years I have been crossing these seas and closely examining them. I have studied navigation and geometry. I am in a position to report on every town, river, mountain, and locate each one on the map. I have read every book published from time immemorial on Cosmography, history and philosophy. I now feel prepared to undertake the discovery of the Indies, and implore Your Highness to favor my project. I am aware that many will scoff at it, but if Your Highness will just furnish the means to execute it, no obstacle will stop me. I hope to succeed."

Later on, standing before a Royal Commission of Enquiry appointed by Juan II., he congratulated the Portuguese

Navigators on their recent maritime discovery, but he concluded that though the trip to India by sea, as contemplated by them possessed many advantages over travelling by land as in the past, yet it must necessarily be accompanied with great inconveniences, as the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope on the way to India entails a considerable loss of time and is fraught with imminent peril. There remained but one solitary solution to the problem: to reach the eastern confines of India by sailing directly to the West. He based his proposition on the sphericity of the Globe. The earth being nearly round, the mariner will reach any given point by sailing East or West. Accordingly, by sailing West as now suggested instead of East as heretofore, he will land upon the Eastern Confines of India without exposing himself to the danger of doubling the much dreaded Cape of Good Hope.

Had Columbus been a Portuguese, his views would have met with a favorable interpretation, but national pride and jealousy kept in check the unbounded enthusiasm of his examiners, and by a most unkingly act His Majesty was in secret conclave with a sea-captain whom he deputed to go in search of the projected voyage of Columbus. The undertaking failed as well as the royal treachery.

God has His great works to perform and selects His own choice to execute them. Columbus was God's own calling and will, with God's grace, triumph over the hostile forces which Satan arrays against the chosen ones of Heaven.

Disowned at Genoa, betrayed at Portugal, the moral power of Columbus, far from waning beneath the pressure of tribulation, waxed stronger and mightier. Like the oak beaten by the cold northern winds, he bent his noble form to the excoerciating lashes of adversity, and in the words of our Catholic poet—Aubrey de Vere.

"He was a man whom danger could not daunt,
Nor sophistry perplex, nor pain subdue,
A stoic, reckless of the world's vain taunt,
And steered the path of honor to pursue."

He set sail for the heroic land of chivalrous Spain. At that time her national

destinies were ruled by Ferdinand II. and Isabella. The fame of the Catholic Queen had spread over the whole European Continent, and her deeds of valor were recited in prose and sung in verse. If he but succeeded in interesting Her Majesty in his cause, he doubted no longer of its ultimate triumph. Divine Providence paved the way for its child of predilection. One day, pinched with hunger, he, with his son, rapped at the convent door of La Rabida, near Palos, and asked for food. As the prior of the monastery, an humble son of St. Francis of Assisi, was waiting on the two visitors and serving out the meagre food as prescribed by the Order of Penance, the Franciscan Friar was favorably prepossessed with the classic look of the elder stranger, and drawing closer to him entered into conversation with him. Juan Perez de la Marchena, a noted cosmographer, was not slow in perceiving that his guest was no other than Columbus whose theories were a revelation to so many.

At once Juan Perez wrote an introductory letter to Her Majesty, his expenitent, soliciting Isabella to grant an audience to the renowned navigator, and to open an investigation into the case of the would-be-discoverer. His petition was granted in recognition of his past spiritual favors. The interview between Isabella and Columbus at Barcelona had the effect of submitting to the discussion of the University of Salamanca the arguments of the Navigator in favor of the contemplated voyage. The weighty preponderance of this learned Institution may be correctly deduced from the fact that its students numbered 8000 and its professional chairs 73.

Columbus pleads his case as an able lawyer in presence of the erudite Doctors of Salamanca, with the lucidity and warmth which characterized him at Portugal. His views are shared in only by a very small majority, among whom appears to advantage the Dominican Diego de Deza, Professor of Theology and afterwards Bishop of Palencia, and though the University generally opposed Columbus in his views, yet the historian Las

Casas makes the following statement: The Catholic Kings owe the Indies to the Dominican Diego de Deza and to St. Stephen's College."

Whatever value may be attached to the opinion of Las Casas, we may safely infer from the general character of Isabella that though considerations like the sympathy of a Juan Perez, the erudition of a Diego de Deza, the patronage of an Apostolic Nuncio, or a Cardinal Mendoza, or the Apology of Saintangel, had great weight in the final determination of Her Majesty, yet they alone without the superior motive of religion would never have found an echo in her magnanimous soul. Great minds like great seas, rise with the tide to great heights. Upon the field of religious thought Isabella and Columbus met and ascended to the same level, and the gifted Queen deposing at the feet of Columbus every weapon of hostility and yielding to the persuasion of divine faith, pledged, if required, the very jewels of her crown to place at his disposal the three historic vessels, the "Santa Maria," "Nina" and "Pinta" and appointed him perpetual and hereditary admiral and viceroy of all the seas and lands which he should discover, together with the tenth of the profits for him and his descendants for ever.

Friday, August the 3rd 1492, Columbus and his crew assisted at Mass to implore God's blessing on his undertaking, and then set sail from the port of Palos. At sea, Columbus was as forbearing and as brave as on land. At times an agreeable and pleasing comparison he whiled away his leisure moments in calming the superstitious fears of the sailors, referred in glowing terms to the land of promise and buoyed up their dejected spirits with the fond hope of a speedy return to their homes. General cordiality prevailed as long as the Canary Islands, the boundary-line of European Discoveries were in sight, but when the fleet distanced them and the seamen were launched out upon the broad Atlantic waves, the storms of angry passion mightier than the ocean-tempest and less controllable began to rage and howl within their breasts and upon their

lips. Sighing like the Israelites of old in the desert for the onions of Egypt, they mercilessly denounced their chief as an ambitious adventurer reckless of their lives in the pursuit of his visionary plan and in their shortsightedness viewing within their reach either a watery grave or an immediate sail homeward, they haughtily demanded the execution of the latter. Columbus, like another Moses, holds on with an iron arm to the helm of power and by his stern look and commanding bearing, though at the risk of being cast into the sea, reduced into submission and hushed into silence their rebellious and mutinous natures. How this depressing strain of despondency contrasts with the enlivening refrain of hopefulness on the night of the 11th October! At about ten o'clock Columbus observed in the far off distance a light that came and went. The crew stood on the fore-deck and almost breathless with expectation waited for the dawn of the 12th. The morning sun of that glorious Friday had scarcely broken through the heavy mist that lay upon the water's surface when the tutored eye of a simple sailor peering through space, detected the first glimmerings of the long-looked for reality. Land! Land! he exclaimed. All eyes were at once turned to the sacred spot. The "Te Deum" a hymn of thanksgiving to God was entoned and its echoes resounded upon the hills of America. Columbus cast anchor at the island of Guanahana, one of the Bahama Islands that extend from Florida to San Domingo. Columbus landed first in his official capacity of viceroy, fell on his knees, kissed the virgin soil and planted the Cross in the name of Castille and Arragon and of Christianity. The emblem of man's redemption stands erect in the new world, bathing in its crimson blood Central America at its feet; with its right arm extending southward and its left northward; with its face fronting the East and the West lying in the background; thus consecrating to Christ's own imperishable Church an area of 15,000,000 square miles with a population of 200,000,000 uncivilized souls; while the

silver-tongued bell of the Consecration announces near by the mystic oblation of Calvary's victim and the devout worshippers bending low their heads in silent adoration become the veteran pioneers of countless generations of all races and colors, who kneeling before the same Catholic altar, have fulfilled literally the Malachias' Prophecy:—"From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean offering; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Columbus coasted along the Archipelago and a tourist rather than explorer, he visited and inspected with unusual interest the most balmy and picturesque islands of Cuba and Havana, as far as San Domingo, whence he embarked for Palos, in Spain, where he arrived March 15th, 1493. The immortal conqueror's first official visit was to the Church of Palos to lay at the feet of the King of Kings the glory of his imperishable victory, and his next duty was to repair to Barcelona to give to his earthly Sovereigns an account of his stewardship.

His reception at Barcelona can be favorably compared only with the magnificence and pomp which greeted the Roman Generals on their return to the imperial city after a glorious battle well fought and won. Six Indians, painted and tattooed in the various colors of their respective settlements formed the vanguard. Next in line came liveried courtiers carrying gold crown and gold bracelets, living parrots, stuffed birds and animals of species unknown. Last in order appeared the Hero of America with a body-guard of young Spanish horsemen, superbly mounted on fiery and richly caparisoned chargers. A platform with steps leading thereto had been erected in the meantime in a large parlor hall of the Casa de la Deputacion and beneath a canopy of gold cloth sat Ferdinand and Isabella with the magnates of the Court. At his approach their Royal Highnesses rose through courtesy, and when the vociferating cheers of the assembled had quieted

they made signs to him to be seated and relate his adventure across the Atlantic. After a brilliant oration that brought tears to every eye, the *Te Deum* was sung in thanksgiving to God who conducted the enterprise to a successful issue through the instrumentality of His devoted servant Columbus.

The golden harvest of souls ripe even to maturity lay scattered broadcast over the entire continent newly discovered. Where were the reapers? Well might Columbus repeat the Master's words: "The harvest indeed is great but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send laborers into the harvest." With the dazzling sunshine of kingly favor, such as has been the privilege but of few ordinary mortals to enjoy, the Apostolic Missionary sought to center all its rays in the spreading and the diffusing of the light of Christianity. He asks for missionaries. He writes to Pope Alexander VI: "I firmly hope to be able yet, with God's assistance to propagate into far off distances the Most Holy Name of Jesus and His Gospel."

In a joint correspondence to Ferdinand and Isabella, he writes: "May the Lord grant long days to your Highnesses, so that you may pursue this noble enterprise which will procure so many advantages to religion, so much glory to Spain, and such lively consolations to all Christians, for the name of Our Lord will spread throughout these countries." Columbus appeals to the hearts of Catholic nations only. He understood fully that the Catholic Church alone can civilize the unconverted Indian races, for to lift them from their utter state of degradation, needed a mightier lever than any human invention, a divine influence which she alone possesses, and when any government foreign to her refining policy attempted to moralize the untutored savage, it abandoned without delay the cause as hopeless and sought extermination as a remedy to the evil.

If Columbus in another correspondence to Isabella advises Her Majesty to despatch to the new colony of Havana none but Catholics, the feelings of Protestantism need not be hurt, for at the

time of the discovery Luther was a Catholic boy of only eight summers and as yet Henry the Eighth was not born.

How shifting the scenes of life are! How uncertain and unreliable earthly honors are! Six years later Columbus stands in the dock before the Court of Spain, not as a conqueror laden with his spoils, but a culprit groaning under the weight of his chains and pleading for his life. Francesco de Bobadilla, with an army of malcontents are his accusers. Columbus is vindicated and blesses God, who "chastises whom He loves." What is gold that has not been purified of its dross by the scorching flame, and similarly what is faith that has not been tried in the fire of persecution? The principle that applies to nations, holds good in parallel cases with individuals. What adds a special lustre to the faith of the Irish people is their irresistible and unconquerable resistance to the combined efforts of all the powers of darkness set up against it. The iron-chains of Columbus were wrought of the purest gold of love that drew his great heart nearer to his God. They were signals from above to ward him off the shoals of self-love and pride, on which lie stranded and shipwrecked many an experienced mariner in the art of seafaring Christian warfare. They were a sublime warning never to keep his eyes off the port of eternity, where lies a continent boundless in extent and incomparably richer in possessions of gold, diamonds, jewels and other precious stones, than the lands which he or any other navigator can discover here below. These considerations endeared them to his memory. He kept these badges of honor with religious care, as his spotless Spouse preserves Peter's chains and the instruments of Christ's Passion and Death, and when dying imposed the obligation of placing them in his coffin alongside of his mortal remains.

But the greatest of all temporal calamities that could befall him, a more disastrous misfortune than iron-chains or even death, was the dreaded summons to Queen Isabella, his foyal protectress, to appear before the tribunal of God. She was universally loved and universally

regretted by her Spanish subjects. No one felt so keenly her loss as Columbus. All his brilliant prospects of the future rested on her benevolent co-operation for their realization. Had she lived longer, doubtless his diplomacy or his powerful arm, if necessary, would have effaced from the Holy Sanctuaries of Jerusalem the Mussulman domination and handed the city over to the Vicar of Christ. His views on this subject had been clearly expressed on a previous occasion in a letter written by him to Her Majesty. "Gold I want to free the Holy Places from the yoke of the Mussulmans, and if by treaty I do not obtain this, I shall levy out of my salary 50,000 foot and 30,000 horse, and when I shall be master of Jerusalem I shall give over its government to the Pope and be no more than an agent of the Church at the threshold of the tomb where my God reposed." With the death of Isabella, expired all the noble aspirations of his magnanimous soul. No hope of success remained for he was aware of the rapacity of his enemies. The event justified his fears. The solemn treaty ratified prior to the discovery between the king and vassal was arbitrarily nullified.

Neither age could chill nor infirmity dampen the fervor of his devotion to the Pope, and when tottering on the edge of the grave, he penned in his dying will a permanent memorial of his strong Catholic convictions as a noble example to be followed by every soldier of the Pope. It reads thus:

"I order my son or my successor in my rights, in case of a schism arising in God's Church, or any attempt to defraud her of her privileges or wealth, to repair at once to the feet of Peter, under penalty of disinheritance, to put a stop to the schism, to keep the Church from being robbed of her rights, and to place at her disposal their whole strength with their weapons, revenues, rental, and capital if necessary."

His prophetic eye seemed to have caught a passing glimpse of the revolting schism which, as early as the dawn of the following century, raised the war-cry against Christ's indissoluble Church, and a transitory view of the disgraceful usur-

pations of the Patrimony of Peter in our age by a national government whose name is synonymous with desecration and sacrilege.

Of all the Catholic laymen, whose names figure conspicuously side by side with Columbus in the history of the past four hundred years none rises to a level with him but Daniel O'Connell; Columbus striking off the fetters of idolatry and superstition from the hands of the savage and substituting in the stead the sweet yoke of Christianity, thus, according to all human conjecture, compensating the incalculable losses in the scales of European Catholicity by the Protestant Reformation; O'Connell, breaking the bonds that held his countrymen tied to the pillory of oppression and replacing them by the strong links of mutual dependance and fraternal union; the one honoring his loved Savior by naming his first discovered island "San Salvador; the other doing him religious honor by raising his hat on every occasion, private or public, when passing before a Catholic Church and by attending Mass every morning; the former paying his homage to the Mother of God by calling one of his ships after her—"Santa Maria"—by singing every evening while on sea the

"Salva Regina" (Hail, Queen), and by sending the first American gold to line the ceiling of one of Her most beautiful Churches in Rome, "Saint Mary Major," "Our Lady of Snow"; the latter, looking forward to victory's goal in the cause of his countrymen with his Rosary beads in hand as he strolled along the lobby of Westminster Hall on the eve of the glorious Emancipation of Catholic Ireland; the former bequeathing to Rome the affection of his heart; the latter, the heart of his affection; both recommending to God their immortal souls in foreign lands and expiring away from the homes of their boyhood; the one in Vallidolid in Spain; the other in Genoa, the birthplace of Columbus; the former consecrating his hallowed remains to Havana, his great American Settlement, where they now lie enshrined in its grand Cathedral; the latter to Ireland, whose noblest interests he espoused and defended. May Catholic Ireland and Catholic America, dearly beloved, ever honor the sacred relics of two illustrious martyrs of duty to church and country, and, kneeling at their graves, learn the all-important lesson that there is no virtue without sacrifice and no crown without thorns. Amen.

BELLEVILLE
SAINT-SUBROT